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USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, DCHA/OFDA, AND AFR/SP
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, USAID/SFO AND FAS
GENEVA FOR NKYLOH
NSC FOR PMARCHAM, MMAGAN, AND TSHORTLEY
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SUBJECT: SUDAN - USAID FLOOD ASSESSMENT IN KASSALA STATE

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¶11. Summary. From August 6 to 9, USAID/SUDAN staff traveled to Kassala State to assess the effects of recent flooding, following unseasonably heavy rainfall in early July. Flooding has affected an estimated 40,000 people, destroyed more than 2,600 homes, and resulted in 10 deaths and extensive damage to agricultural lands. Current response measures are considered adequate and well coordinated. However, with rains expected to continue through the wet season in September, aid organizations and government agencies remain concerned about the potential for additional flooding. End summary.

Flood Assessment

¶12. While Sudan is prone to annual flooding, the early onset of the 2007 rainy season has been characterized by excessive rainfall and flash floods, resulting in widespread displacement and damage. In Kassala State, flooding along the Gash River in Kassala town and surrounding rural areas, including Atbara River and Gash localities, has affected an estimated 40,000 people, and damaged homes, crops, and infrastructure. In the New Halfa area of Atbara River locality, rains and run off from surrounding hills have affected 18 villages and nearly 15,000 people. Aid agencies report an additional 21,000 flood-affected people in Kassala town and more than 5,000 in Gash locality. In the rural areas outside of Kassala, USAID staff observed large numbers of displaced families that have relocated to higher ground along the Kassala-Aroma highway, including families who have lost their homes and others who have moved due to fears of additional flooding.

¶13. A UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) assessment reported extensive damage to the agricultural sector, including the loss of an estimated 4,000 fruit trees, 2,000 acres of vegetable crops, and 350 metric tons (MT) of dry fodder. In addition, flooding collapsed 625 wells and eroded more than 900 acres of fertile land.

¶14. With rains expected to continue through September, the potential for additional flooding remains a significant concern, as does the risk of disease epidemics resulting from the floods. The Sudanese Red Crescent Society and USAID partner GOAL reported 19 cases of acute watery diarrhea, including 5 confirmed cases of cholera in flood-affected villages of Atbara River locality. GOAL is working on establishing a base in the area.

Humanitarian Response

¶5. Relief efforts to date have been well coordinated between the government, UN Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) through the Joint Emergency Committee, facilitating a rapid and organized response. The UN State Team-Crisis Management Team and partners are working in four main locations, and emergency distribution points have been established in five locations that are perceived to be at greatest risk. State authorities continue to implement repairs and reinforce the banks of the Gash River in Kassala.

¶6. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and NGOs have distributed emergency relief supplies, including tents, plastic sheeting, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, blankets, and health kits. UNICEF has provided medical kits for 101 health facilities to serve a population of 100,000 through September. In addition, the UN Joint Logistics Center has established an emergency stock of relief supplies stored in UN World Food Program (WFP) facilities.

¶7. Humanitarian organizations are also focusing on chlorinating water sources, spraying standing water, and implementing other activities to mitigate the spread of waterborne illnesses as the rainy season continues in August and September. UNICEF has provided a supply of water purification tablets for Kassala town through October, in addition to erecting water bladders and tankering water to rural flood-affected populations. In Kassala town, state authorities are coordinating vector control efforts through aerial spraying.

¶8. WFP and state authorities have coordinated closely to ensure adequate coverage of food assistance and to avoid duplication of efforts, dividing coverage between rural and urban areas. On July 12, WFP distributed 159 MT of food assistance as part of an initial 15-day ration to 18,550 flood-affected people in rural areas of

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Kassala. Kassala State authorities provided food distributions from Red Sea and Gedaref states to populations in Kassala and Aroma towns. In response to reports of newly displaced populations along the Kassala-Aroma highway, WFP conducted an assessment on August 9, and is preparing a second 15-day ration distribution of 186 MT of food assistance to 20,000 people. The 1,500 increase in beneficiaries reflects the identification of additional displaced populations north of Aroma who have relocated from low-lying areas due to fears of additional flooding.

¶9. In response to a critical shortfall of plastic sheeting within the UN common non-food item pipeline for the north and east, USAID airlifted 1,300 rolls of plastic sheeting, from its warehouse in Dubai to Khartoum on August 8 and 9. Consigned to UNICEF, a portion of the USAID contribution, valued at more than USD 500,000, is helping to provide shelter to flood-affected populations in Kassala State.

¶10. In addition, USAID partners operating in Kassala, including International Rescue Committee (IRC), GOAL, and FAO, are contributing to the flood response through the provision of relief commodities, health, and water, sanitation, and hygiene services. GOAL has distributed emergency relief supplies to nearly 30,000 flood-affected people, and established a mobile clinic in Kassala town to provide primary health care to 20,000 people. IRC health, sanitation, and hygiene promotion activities target more than 9,000 people in Kassala town. In addition, FAO is providing vaccinations for animals, as well as seeds, tools, and sacs and has pledged USD 450,000 to support flood-affected agriculturalists.

¶11. In meetings with USAID staff, government officials, including the state wali, expressed their appreciation for the role of the UN and NGOs in containing the disaster and assisting affected households.

Preparedness and Mitigation

¶12. Current response measures are considered adequate, although government and relief agencies remain concerned about the likelihood of renewed flooding. In meetings with USAID staff, the RCO identified the need to improve state preparedness and mitigation efforts. Recommendations included securing tents and emergency relief supplies for 50,000 households, implementing water, sanitation, and hygiene and environmental activities, such as spraying stagnant water, intensifying sanitation and hygiene awareness, and ensuring the provision of clean water. In collaboration with the UN Development Program, the RCO is also preparing a crisis management capacity building program with the state government. In addition to RCO recommendations, the state wali proposed the construction of dykes along the Gash River bank as a long-term engineering solution to protect Kassala from future flooding.

POWERS